



# **POET BUSINESS INSTITUTE**

## **The Semester:**

**The Workbook On The Art Of Living On The Art**

**Geoff Anderson**

**diVERSES Books First Edition**

THE SEMESTER: THE WORKBOOK ON THE ART OF LIVING ON THE ART

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**...to the hours of wasted waiting,  
to the knowledge that somewhere ahead  
a man is waiting who will say, “No”**

**Philip Levine, “What Work Is”**

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## **Why The Semester?**

My name is Geoff Anderson. I am a poet who had a chapbook twice rejected as a finalist in a span of a couple months by the same judge.

The rejections were among the best events to have happened to me. I suddenly woke up.

I questioned why I gave away the future of my art to people who know nothing about the work's goals and intentions. Since then, I have decided to show up in all spaces as a poet, whether I am teaching, or parenting, or in the company of friends, or with poets. This has meant that it is necessary for me to create a livelihood from poetry.

Even today, when I tell people I help poets live on poetry, I am met with skepticism. The narrative around most artists is that the art is for the side. Yet for me, poetry is a vehicle for guiding my students to better communication and spoken performance. I found my art not solely fulfilling for my own creativity, but the lives of others, and how to do so without compromise.

This is less to say that your path will look like this, and more that there are many paths towards creative and financial independence.

This manual is for poets who not only believe in the creative force of poetry, but also its financial force. The exercises we are set to embark on can be applied to small side offers that cover groceries for a month. However, the principles can scale to become large enough to replace full-time work.

**We will consider the offer you create around poetry to be the thesis of the Semester.**

Let's begin to live on poetry, however you want to live on poetry.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

## Additional Formats

For video guidance on the modules, visit [www.diversespoetry.com/institute](http://www.diversespoetry.com/institute) for a playlist of videos that cover many of the topics contained in this textbook.

## What To Expect From The Semester

The Semester is going to develop your understanding of an area of focus, which will then be used to not only create an offer—**your poetry thesis**—for the world based on poetry or an artistic discipline, but to also position you as a resource in the community for the area you target.

This is very intentional. When many artists put work into the world, it can be challenging to repeat the process—the audience that buys the first work may not buy or even be aware of the second. For writers, often the audience is less ours, more the publishing house's.

To avoid these issues, The Semester aims to position you as a resource people can turn to repeatedly for the variety of offers and services, or even just the information, you may provide through your art. Instead of the work being the sole focus of people's attention, you become the magnet.

To be clear: The Semester is a process that takes time. The curriculum does not necessarily need money to implement—it is focused on what is known as organic reach, where what we share spreads by what we put forth and what others are willing to share.

If you are looking to begin making significant impact and income through poetry endeavors in a matter of days, The Semester will disappoint you. However, once your platform has grown enough, you will find that whatever you launch has a chance of success as your audience consistently turns to what you offer.

The Semester has modules built around the creation of your thesis to sell based on your poetry/art. Rather than focusing entirely on your poetry thesis, the opening modules are centered more on learning more about what kind of platform you wish to create, who you wish to serve through your art, and your unique positioning.

When working with my communication students, I often tell them that they will change, but not immediately how they want to change. Instead, before they notice major growth in their own speaking and accents, they have to notice the differences between how native speakers sound and themselves. That is frustrating; a communication student wants changes in production, not perception. Yet without being able to hear the differences in sounds, it becomes immensely more difficult to become someone new.

I ask that you consider this for your own development. In a way we must enjoy the process as much as the result. The mindset diVERSES operates on is this: a business is not made for profit, but for impact. To have the impact you want requires more than who you are right now. I am excited for you to meet the person you become at the conclusion of The Semester.

**Because he does not compete,  
the world cannot compete with him.**

**Laozi, “Chapter 66”, translated by Li-Young Lee and Yun Wang**



# **Module 1:**

**Determine The Focus**



## Exercise 1.1: Determining The Focus

---

To start thinking about creating a poetry offer for the world, let's take time to reflect on ourselves. We don't want to create what will emotionally drain us in a decade. We also don't want to create what the world does not need. There are four key concepts to feeling like we are on the path we are meant to be, not purely from a business perspective, but from a sense of fulfillment. A concept known as *ikigai* speaks to this.

On the following page, you will see a Venn Diagram. In each corresponding circle, write:

Step 1: Write down 5 passions you have beyond poetry (e.g., drawing, cooking)

Step 2: Write down 5 areas of your expertise (e.g., carpentry, crochet)

Step 3: Write down 5 world needs that interest you (e.g., fitness, mental health)

Step 4: Write down 5 skills people would pay you for (e.g., yardwork, programming)

Some notes on these concepts:

**Passion** does not even have to be an action. A passion can be a color, an animal, or an ideal. Whatever sparks joy, even after hours of long work, is a direction to move towards.

**Expertise** does not mean that you have to be the best in the world. A teacher can survive well if they are even just one page ahead of their students. In fact, there can be value in being a guide who only recently accomplished a challenge vs someone who has done it for decades.

**World needs** can sound intimidating, but not all needs are global warming level of challenge. A water bottle may be enough for someone who is even a little thirsty. A gardener may want a glove for one specific weed in their yard. A movie answers the question of what to do tonight.

**Paid for** offers can be as big as plumbing emergencies and as little as a trinket to put into a Christmas stocking. People willingly pay for charms on a bracelet. People willingly pay for a better seat at the game (just as some people willingly pay to stream the thing at home).

The goal:

Having completed the diagram, the focus should be clear: can we find an item in the middle that meets all four criteria? Three out of four really is not good enough in the long-term. **I've provided my own experience as an example; you'll see teaching becomes a clear center for me.**

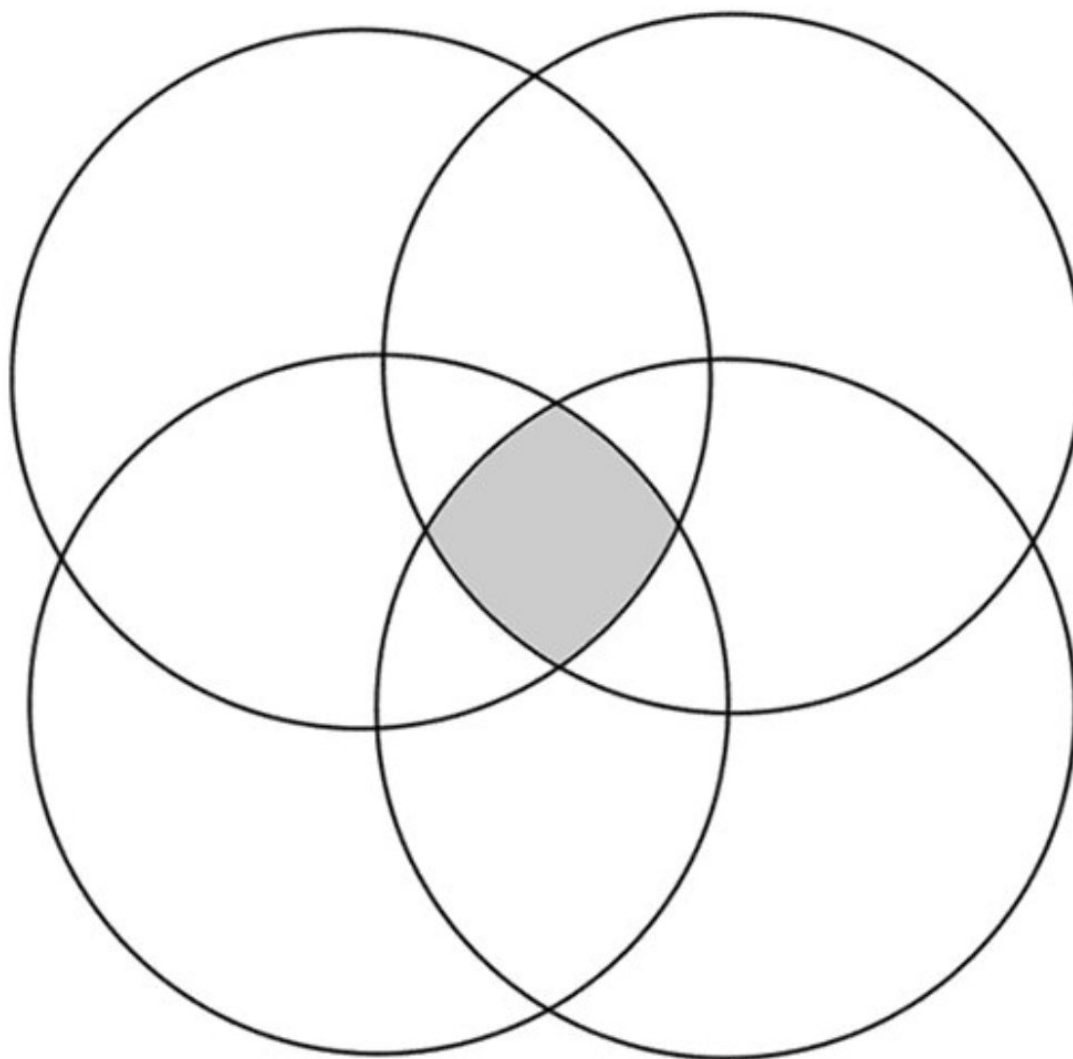
Complete this sentence:

I will merge **POETRY** AND \_\_\_\_\_

(for instance, I merge **poetry and communication instruction**).

Passion

Expertise



Paid For

World Need

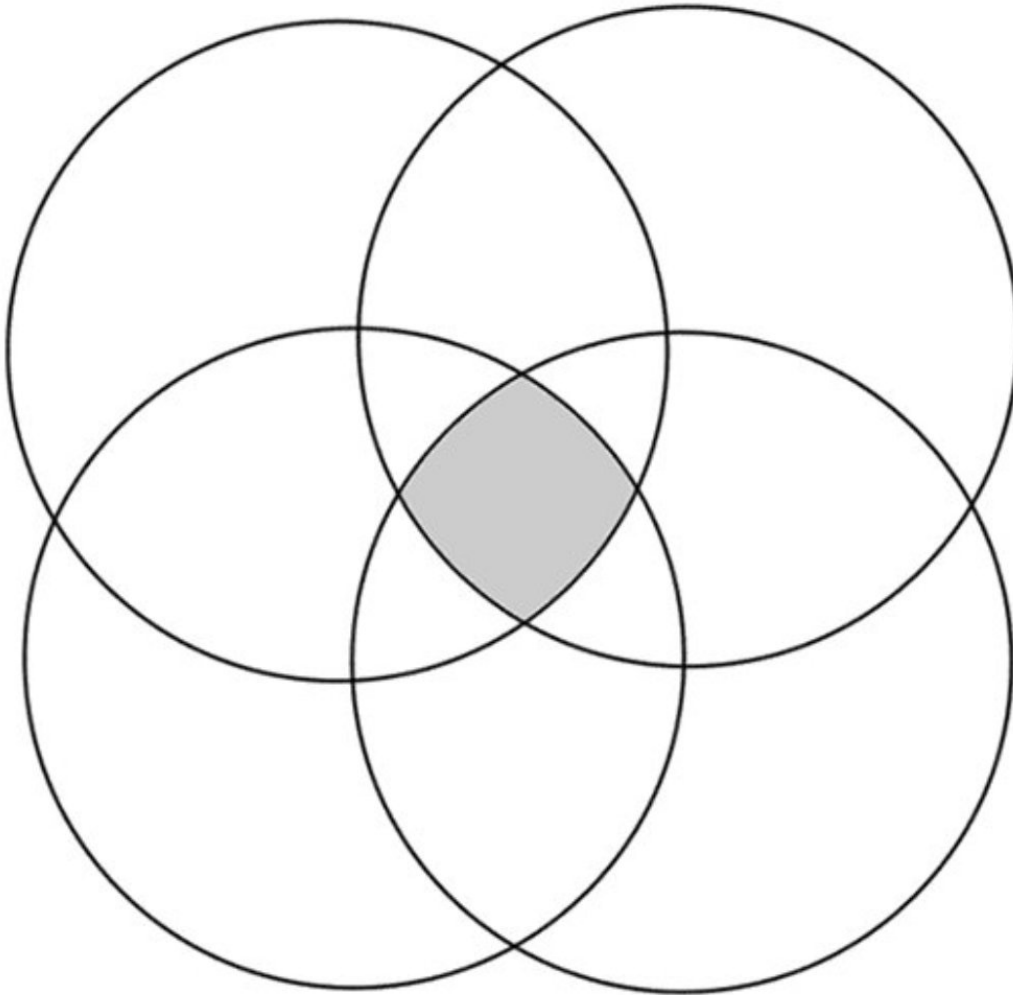
Geoff Example

Passion

languages, writing,  
basketball, teaching, games

Expertise

teaching, organizing, editing,  
design, video/audio production



Paid For

teaching, editing, video/audio  
organizing

World Need

communication, teacher training,  
English, fathers, food



## Exercise 1.2: The Reframe

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As poets, the narrative around what poetry can and cannot do is reinforced by education, public perception, and because of these elements, our own biases.

All of the conditioning can be unlearned. Poetry is not separate from the rest of the world, but applicable to wherever we wish to use it.

When people raise an eyebrow at the idea of people buying poetry, that is a sign that the person values what poetry offers. People pay for what they believe gives back more than the price.

Price is not set; value depends on context. Consider: what is the most you would pay for a bottle of water right now, in your present situation? Now imagine you are at a gas station in a desert, you are out of water, and the next closest place is a thousand miles away. You may not want to, but you'd probably be willing to pay more for that same water bottle.

The value of our skills is similar. Consider the following scenarios:

1. When is a brain surgeon most valuable?

---

2. When is a brain surgeon least valuable?

---

3. How much would you willingly pay a photographer to take pictures of you today?

---

4. How much did/would you willingly pay a photographer to take your wedding photos?

---

For poetry, the reason people don't expect people to pay a poet is because the poet has not found the context where people, in general, would pay for the poetry.

My communication students would not pay me for my poems or come to my classes if the focus was just poetry. However, every day, they come to my classes and we work with poems, even ones I've written. What's the difference?

I have found the link between poetry and what my clients value. By looking at your chart from exercise one, we can start to identify the world needs people would pay us for; now

we need to connect that with our art. The formula is a sentence to complete based on what we learned in Exercise 1; I'll also provide my example.

*I am a poet who helps \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
by \_\_\_\_\_*

(I am a poet who helps **communication students** to **become better speakers** by **doing communication exercises with poetry**).

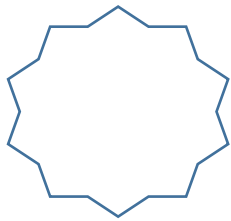
Notice that my poetry itself is unaffected—many of the poems I use with students have already been written and even published in respected journals. Instead, my poems have found an entire new life as a vehicle that leads people to the outcome they wish for themselves.



### Exercise 1.3: The Expertise

Before they turn to your poetry thesis, people want to feel confident in your ability to lead them to the result they desire. Credibility can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, and some are even more subjective than empirical. On sites like Netflix and Yelp, people look at reviews and ratings. When students look at colleges, they often consider name recognition. If your poetry thesis leans more professional, such as a form of coaching or training, people may want to know about your credentials and read testimonials from previous attendees.

Your messaging does not always need to reference your credentials, but there are times we will want to point to your experience and authority. Here are some credentials to consider:

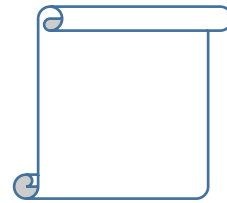


**Awards**

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**Certificates/Degrees**

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**Testimonials**

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**Knowledge/Skills**

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## Exercise 1.4: How To Gain Expertise

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What if you don't have poetry publications or aren't an expert in the area where you want to help others; maybe you don't feel famous enough or experienced enough.

The reality is you already have skills and knowledge that you can put forward to give you credibility; none of it is made up.

The following is a list of areas that may be helpful to consider as you begin to map out what truly makes you a credible resource:

**Testimonials**—if you don't have any, consider doing a small version of your thesis with people for free in exchange for testimonials.

**Collaborations**—if you have worked with other people or organizations, make sure you mention that in your platforms/on your own website

**References on research**—whether it is research you have conducted or information you have found, these are opportunities to demonstrate you are knowledgeable in your field. Share findings, names of researchers, and critical questions you have about the research

**Case studies**—on your platforms, archive your own processes and findings; conduct your own research to share with the world

**Before/After**—obviously very well suited for visual, the progression/change that occurs can be used as a testament to the work you do. Again, it may be worth doing a free example with someone who is willing

**Live Demos/Replay Demos**—with livestreaming, you can record a live class and have people join to learn an aspect of what your full poetry thesis entails. These work especially well for education platforms.

**What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?**

**Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"**



## **Module 2:**

**Prepare The Focus**



## Exercise 2.1: The Right Platform

---

When you have filled in the sentence about who you are, who you help, and how you help them, it is time to determine where we will interact with the world. As I have the most experience with reaching my communication students online, that will be my primary concentration with the following exercises. However, you can modify the strategy to local/in-person if that fits you better.

We need to understand where we feel most comfortable. Rank the following categories with 1 being the easiest and 4 being the hardest for you: **Video, Audio, Writing, Graphics.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

For example: I often meet poets who don't like making videos but are very comfortable writing.

**1. Writing**

**2. Graphics**

**3. Audio**

**4. Video**

This differentiation is important because it will help us choose our platform to find the people we want to serve. For now, let's focus on a single platform to grow on—choosing multiple takes too much work until you're very comfortable with your progress. In general:

**Writing platforms:** X, Threads, LinkedIn, Facebook, blogs, newsletters

**Short/Vertical video:** Reels (Instagram/Facebook), TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Shorts (Youtube)

**Longer Videos/Horizontal:** Youtube

**Photos:** Instagram, Facebook, newsletter, blog

My communication business started with Youtube. Even today, though I have a presence on other platforms, the majority of my focus is centered on Youtube—Youtube's analytics

are the ones that concern me the most (not coincidentally, Youtube is also the platform that pays me the most).

### **A Note On Video**

While the platform you selected may not be video-based, there is a final consideration to make. **Out of all the forms you can create with, video gives you the widest variety of possibilities.**

When you make a video, the audio can be stripped and made into a podcast / audiobook / track to post. Also when you make a video, you can generate a transcript based on what was said (in fact, if you upload the video to Youtube, Youtube will create that transcript automatically and for free), which you can then polish and edit into posts, blogs, books, articles, and other forms of writing.

Longer videos can also be cut and edited into shorter videos; the aspect ratio can also be changed to be horizontal (typical for Youtube videos and TV) or vertical (Shorts, TikToks, Reels, and what typically are viewed on mobile devices). For these reasons, it may be worth giving video more consideration, even if the videos themselves you do not share publicly.

When you have your platform of choice, it is time to do some research.



## Exercise 2.2: Researching The Platform

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Whether Youtube, podcasts, blogs, or short form video platform, we need to begin understanding how that platform works so we can create accordingly for it. Every platform is different; even if multiple platforms do short vertical videos, they may each look for different traits (e.g, videos on LinkedIn feel different than videos prepared for Instagram).

Beyond the platform itself, every field also has its unique expectations. Poetry videos have a different composition on Youtube than on Facebook; writing on X may look different than writing on Threads.

For our research purposes, find 5 “successful” accounts on the platform you like who talk about your topic (or something similar). Once you find the accounts, here is a checklist to consider to help prepare your new platform. Though this list is not exhaustive, here are eleven questions to start asking yourself as you identify your platform and area of focus:

- 1) *What are 5 characteristics that each of the accounts you selected share*

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- 2) *How does each video/post begin in the first 5 sentences/first 30 seconds*

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- 3) *How often do scenes change/transitions occur/B-roll & graphics appear*

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- 4) *For visual sources, what colors and objects appear/ how is the speaker dressed/where is the setting*

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5) *What trends do you notice in the comments*

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6) *What kind of music is in the background/sound effects are used (if any)*

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7) *What trends are in the titles of the content (and thumbnail/image if applicable)*

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8) *Which posts are most/least popular*

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9) *Which topics receive the best engagement*

---

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10) *How often do the accounts posts*

---

---

11) *What can you guess about the accounts intended audience*

---

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### Exercise 2.3: Understanding Audience Expectations

Using your knowledge from the research you conducted on accounts to use as models, let's now consider the accounts from a viewer/listener/reader perspective.

Every field has unique expectations. If you find a Youtube channel on cats, you probably expect kittens, cat toys, maybe reviews of cat products, and cats behaving cute or weird.

Based on your ikigai chart, let's predict what our audience will see in our categories.

	POETRY	ADDITIONAL FOCUS
OBJECTS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT		
WORDS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT		
TITLES/POSTS/ QUESTIONS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ		
TRENDS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT		
STYLES YOU EXPECT		

Here is an example of my chart:

	POETRY	COMMUNICATION
OBJECTS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT	books pens paper typewriter classroom	tongue mouth soundwaves globes plants
WORDS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT	poem line write publish manuscript	breath tongue lips body language speaking
TITLES/POSTS/ QUESTIONS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ	How to write ____ How to publish ____ Write better ____ How to read a poem Beginner poetry mistakes	How to say ____ Best accent tips English tongue twisters Speak confidently Shadowing and listening exercises
TRENDS YOU EXPECT TO SEE/HEAR/READ ABOUT	Self-publishing Ai Instagram poetry Poetry awards Poet laureate	Popular English shows Famous celebrities speaking English Don't say ____
STYLES YOU EXPECT	Casual Moderate To Slow Speech/Pace Articulate Calm Energy	Slow To Moderate Speech/Pace Clear Articulation Smiling Expressive



## Exercise 2.4: Creating Buckets



As we continue preparing materials to share on our new platform, let's begin understanding the central styles of writing, videos, podcasts, or other forms we will create around.

The concept we will use is buckets. Buckets refer to category types that you can use repeatedly.

Let's use the diVERSES Youtube channel as an example. There a video podcast series called Arts & Offers with two co-hosts and at times a guest discussing poetry and business topics. There is a poetry reality show, The Listening Room. There is a book club on applying business books to poetry called Creative Companionship. There are interviews with poets discussing the creative projects they do. There is a poem analysis close reading show called Fine Print. There is a series of writing generation exercises set to music called Lo-fi Poet.

Each of these video types is a specific type of bucket—if you see a video on diVERSES, it generally falls into one of those categories.

As you look at other platforms/accounts for inspiration and models, start paying attention to the specific type of videos/writing/audio they create. Are they doing interviews? Are they doing live demos? Are they doing clips or notes from coaching sessions? Are they doing skits?

For your own platform, think of five buckets that would be appropriate for you. Or, if you find that challenging, create a list of buckets for one of the accounts you are using as a model

<b>diVERSES Buckets:</b>	<b>Poetry Reality Show</b>	<b>Business Book Club For Poets</b>	<b>Close Reading Poems</b>	<b>Video Podcast On Poetry/Business</b>	<b>Interviews With Poets</b>
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<p>Your Buckets:</p>				
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Once you have your buckets, think of two ideas for each.

<b>diVERSES Buckets:</b>	<b>Poetry Reality Show</b>	<b>Business Book Club For Poets</b>	<b>Close Reading Poems</b>	<b>Video Podcast On Poetry/Business</b>	<b>Interviews With Poets</b>
<p>What Fits In Each Bucket</p>	<p>Each show features a different poet reading to friends who do not know each other</p>	<p>Reading through books and highlighting key takeaways (Marty Neumeier’s “Zag”, Chris Do’s “Unbland Yourself”</p>	<p>Pick a poem and identify one key element to focus on during the analysis (e.g., how the poem uses stakes)</p>	<p>Discuss an aspect of creating a poetry business (e.g., how to conduct sales calls; how to find collaboration partners)</p>	<p>Interview a different poet each episode with a focus on a single element of poetry (e.g., how they use poetry in the classroom; how they organize book launches</p>

<p>Your Buckets:</p>					
<p>What Fits In Each Bucket</p>					

**A note about what ideas to use:**

There are two types of content: evergreen and ephemeral. Evergreen content is a topic that people will find relevant today, tomorrow, and even years from now. Consider videos that help you fix a clogged drain, or blog posts that contain craft essays.

Ephemeral videos often touch on trends or topics that will only be of interest for a short time. Sports highlights, for instance, are great after a game, but become less frequently watched a week or month later. Books or movies that are popular now are likely not going to be popular in a few months or years.

Having a mix of both in your bucket categories can be helpful. When a topic trends, more people are searching for it. If you catch the beginning of a trend, it's an advantage because people look for the topic, but there isn't enough available.

Though evergreen gets smaller views and less attention, especially in the beginning, it can surpass ephemeral videos over time.

Consider your Poetry AND (again, my education channel's Poetry AND is "poetry" and "communication").

Let's return to your bucket and think of one trending and one evergreen topic. **For diVERSES for trendy, the Listening Room could invite a poet who recently won a popular award. An evergreen topic would be the writing advice the poet discusses during the show.**

**Still not sure what's trending? Try looking at news headlines, seeing what videos appear on Youtube in a private/incognito browser, or identifying movies/shows that are the most popular right now.**

Your Buckets:  trendy					
evergreen					



## Exercise 2.5: Determining What To Say

---

Buckets are helpful for determining format, but what are we actually going to say/write/create for each format on our platform of choice?

**Here is the 3 x 3 principle from Erica Mallet to apply to your poetry thesis.**

### **Step One: Theme**

What are the themes that most important for you? For diVERSES, I am centered on creative and financial **independence (1)** for poets, allowing artists to pursue their **artistic (2)** nature also understanding basic **business (3)** concepts.

**Theme one: independence**

**Theme two: artistic**

**Theme three: business**

Your themes can be nouns, they can adjectives, or even short phrases. The key is that they are specific enough to speak to a unique group of people, while being broad to enough to speak about easily for you. Naturally, you should have a natural inclination and interest in them.

Theme one: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme two: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme three: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Two: Core Belief**

For each theme, we need to identify three core beliefs that you can speak on repeatedly. For instance, here are three core beliefs diVERSES has about independence:

*1. Core belief about independence:*

**Poets have the ability to put work into the world on their own terms.**

2. *Core belief about independence:*

**Poets do not have to wait for gatekeepers, corporate poetry systems, donors, or stakeholders for their work to find an audience.**

3. *Core belief about independence:*

**There have never been more tools available to poets who wish to create poetry and bring it to their audience on their own.**

When you finish creating three core beliefs for each of your themes, you'll have 9 sentences to act as a guide for everything related to your platform.

**Theme one:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief one:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief two:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief three:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Theme two:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief one:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief two:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief three:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Theme three:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief one:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief two:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Core belief three:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Exercise 2.6: Creating Metrics Of Success

As we create the platform we'll be using to help people find us, learn more about our topic, and share our expertise, it is important to consider how we'll know if our platform is a success. Different goals will create different expectations; here are some questions to consider so you can identify what success means for you.

1. When would 1,000 views on a post be worse than getting 100 views?

---

2. What do you want your platform to give you if it becomes successful?

---

3. Order the actions you want people to take when they find your profiles.

(1 is the most important goal, 5 the least)

**subscribe | buy/order | schedule a call | leave a comment | visit your site**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Remember: be honest about your goals. If the main goal is to get the right people to your art studio or to buy your book, having a high amount of views may be less valuable to track than seeing how many people from your profiles visited your website. A channel with fewer subscribes and views can still earn magnitudes more than a platform with a million if the right people are being reached.



## Exercise 2.7: Setting The Commitments

---

When starting a new project like your thesis, it can be easy to be pulled in different directions. The idea of having a singular focus, when there is so much we want to create and offer, feels limiting.

At this initial stage of your thesis, having one area to prioritize can be beneficial for a period of time. For instance, if you're creating a group that meets once a week, but are thinking about adding an additional group, a podcast, and apparel, hold off on the extras until the weekly group operates in a stable way.

To have a better idea of what is most important for you to prioritize first, consider completing these statements:

1. For the next **90 days**, the area of my thesis that I will focus on the most is

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Here are three focuses that I want to have later, but are not for right now:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

A final exercise to keep the focus in mind is to **write a thank you letter from your future self (e.g., from ten years in the future) to your current self:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_

It has helped me to \_\_\_\_\_

Because you started \_\_\_\_\_

I was able to \_\_\_\_\_.